

IN BRIEF

A NEW BREEDING AREA FOR THE SONG THRUSH
TURDUS PHILOMELOS IN NORTH PORTUGAL

The Song Thrush is a partially migratory Palaearctic species which breeds over a vast area from Western Europe to Central Asia. The Iberian Peninsula constitutes an important wintering area for this species. The movements of the partially migratory populations may be affected by poor weather (Santos 1982, 1985).

The historical evidence concerning the possible breeding of this species in Portugal is mainly restricted to the Portuguese national breeding Atlas, which refers to possible nesting in the Coroa Hills (northeast Portugal) (Rufino 1989). Earlier, Tait (1924) mentioned nesting of this species in the Cabrera Hills (Puebla de Sanábria), on the Spanish side of the boundary of the Montesinho Natural Park (northeast Portugal). More recently, its breeding was confirmed in Portugal for the first time. In 1991, a nest was discovered in Peneda-Gerês National Park (northwest Portugal) (Santarém 1991, Pimenta & Santarém 1996).

In field surveys for the breeding Atlas of the Montesinho Natural Park (north Bragança) (1992–1995) and the breeding Atlas of Nogueira Hills (southwest Bragança) (1995–1996) the Song Thrush was



Figure 1. Distribution map of the Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* breeding area in northeast Portugal, based on 10×10 UTM squares.

TABLE 1

Location of confirmed, probable, or possible breeding records of Song Thrushes in northeast Portugal

Place	Year	10 × 10 UTM squares	Habitat	Breeding status
Montesinho Hills (Montesinho)	1992	PG 84	Oak woodland	Possible
Montesinho Hills (Vilarinho)	1994	PG 74	Riparian vegetation	Possible
Rabal	1992	PG 83	Riparian vegetation	Confirmed
Soeira	1993	PG 73	Riparian vegetation	Probable
Vinhais	1993	PG 63	Riparian vegetation	Probable
Cobelas	1994	PG 53	Riparian vegetation	Possible
Moimenta	1995	PG 64	Agro-forestry	Possible
Gestosa	1994	PG 63	Agro-forestry	Possible
Nogueira Hills	1995	PG 82	Riparian vegetation	Probable
Nogueira Hills	1996	PG 81	Riparian vegetation	Confirmed

detected in nine 10 × 10 km UTM squares. These data represent the first breeding evidence of this species in the northeast of the country, indicating the existence of a second and larger nucleus in northern Portugal.

It occurs mostly in riparian vegetation consisting of Common Alder *Alnus glutinosa*, Narrow-leaved Ash *Fraxinus angustifolia* and poplars, or White Poplar *Populus alba* and Black Poplar *P. nigra* associated with moors and highland pastures. It also occurs in oak woods and mixed deciduous woods formed mainly by Pyrenean Oak *Quercus pyrenaica* and Birch *Betula* sp. (see Table 1).

The apparent absence of this species in northern Portugal in the past was mainly due to an insufficient coverage of the more remote areas and did not necessarily reflect its real distribution. Nevertheless, it is believed that in recent years this species' breeding distribution has expanded southwards to certain areas in the north of Portugal, resulting in the distribution presented here for the northeast (Fig. 1). To support this idea some local hunters report that this thrush has only bred in Nogueira Hills for the last five years. It should be noted that the distribution presented may still be somewhat incomplete due to difficulties in detecting Song Thrushes breeding at low densities.

References:

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